

TURNER, (Speech) Q44

Director Stansfield Turner

Friday, March 29, 1979

[Formal Address]

DIRECTOR STANSFIELD TURNER: ...We'll now receive questions, and we welcome questions, but not statements. Also, let the individuals in some cases repeat the questions so that everybody can hear them.

Are there any questions? Yes, sir.

Q: The question is if a private organization is not involved with the federal government were to put a satellite in orbit to monitor foreign countries to make sure that they lived up to their agreements with the United States, would that be in violation of any present regulations? Is that correct?

DIRECTOR TURNER: I don't know of any regulation it would be in violation of. And of course, there are private satellites up for communications purposes. It's a rather expensive proposition you are proposing. But there are proposals on the international scene attempting to ask for some kind of international satellite that would check on everybody and be under some ecumenical control of some sort. And that has merit. I think the French are proposing it primarily. It has difficulties particularly of a technical nature also.

But if you can raise the dough, let's have at it.

Yes, sir.

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Q: Admiral Turner, we've heard about in recent years, really -- about the the CIA's position on unauthorized publications by former agents of the CIA. Is it all worth it?

MAN: The question is that there's been a considerable amount of publicity about publications by former CIA employees. And is all the publicity and -- is all the publicity worth it?

DIRECTOR TURNER: I want to make sure I answer your question as you want. Is it worth our making a fuss over this?

Q: Yes, exactly.

DIRECTOR TURNER: Yes, it's very definitely worth making a fuss over this.

[Laughter and applause.]

I tried to point out that if we want to continue to get information in foreign countries, we have to be able to protect the people who will risk themselves to do things for us. But beyond that, a man like Mr. Agee writes a book, publishes a newsletter with money I don't know where he gets, expressly to disclose the names of Central Intelligence Agency personnel who are not known to the public, who make a career of considerable sacrifice to keep themselves anonymous. It's not easy. And put yourself in the shoes of someone who graduates from Cal Tech, comes to work for us, accepts the sacrifice; accepts the sacrifice of living anonymously, gets ten or fifteen years into that life, is just becoming really valuable to us, and suddenly is totally uncovered, for no reason that that person can help, through no fault of his own.

It's sort of like a surgeon having his hands cut off in an accident. His usefulness to his career is hurt by a traitorous man like Philip Agee.

[Applause.]

Q: As Director of the CIA, what does Admiral Turner feel [is] the biggest danger facing the American public in the near future?

DIRECTOR TURNER: I'm glad you asked that question, which means I'm trying to think of an answer.

I think self-confidence in ourselves, in our democratic processes, in our ability to make the sacrifices that may be necessary, economically, militarily, politically is

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a very important factor today. I think, secondly, our ability to continue to lead the world on the economic scene is a major challenge to this country, because while I'm not an economist, I'm not sure the economists understand the international economic mechanisms as well as we thought and hoped. No blame on them. But it's a terrific challenge. And we are clearly the leaders.

And finally I'd say we've got to continue to recognize our obligations as the leading power in the Free World to lead the world in a political sense, in a good political sense; not in one of domination, but one of true leadership.

Yes.

Q: Could you characterize the qualifications for a CIA agent, what it's like to be one, salary and things like that?

[Laughter.]

MAN: The question is, what is it like to be a CIA agent?

[Laughter and applause.]

DIRECTOR TURNER: Well, you'll start at about \$15,000. Now we're talking about being a CIA agent. You're talking about that portion of our business which is the clandestine collection of intelligence as opposed to our huge research department, which is much like any university's research department. And it's not necessarily undercover. That is, people don't have to hesitate saying they work for the CIA as a physicist in our laboratories and that sort of thing.

But the people who go out and do the spying activity, they come in at GS-8 or GS-9 on the government schedule, which is 13 to \$15,000. We are not particularly concerned about what discipline you come from, academically. Obviously, we have to have a spread. But almost all disciplines are eligible. What we look for are people who have shown some unique sign of excellence. They were particularly good....

[End of Side 1.]

...We actually prefer people have who have been through their educational experience and have had two or three, four years of other experience, either a military tour, some activity in the business field. We like that little bit of added experience, added maturity again, be-

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cause when you go overseas for us in some anonymous way, you will be a contact between us and the actual spy, the people we deal with in foreign countries who give us information.

But as I say, we can't follow you down the street when you're being careful to evade anybody seeing you and make decisions for you as you go about your business. You'll spend a great deal of your life overseas in many, many countries. You'll come back and help direct those activities from our headquarters to overseas. So it's a back-and-forth operation. It's not as derring-do as James Bond. But it's exciting and it's terribly contributory to our country's welfare.

Yes, sir.

Q: [Inaudible. Repeated below by Director Turner.]

DIRECTOR TURNER: Why did we put the Shah of Iran into power with less than \$100,000? Why was it so easy?

Q: The question was, why did we lose him so easily?

DIRECTOR TURNER: Why did we lose him so easily? Oh.

[Laughter.]

I don't think we lost him. We weren't entirely responsible for that. But let me start at the beginning.

Yes, the CIA had an important role to play in the Shah's return to his power after having been ousted in 1952 and returned in 1953. But as much as I'd like to take full credit for that, as an agency official, I would say that the Central Intelligence Agency could only have brought that about for \$75,000, according to the morning newspaper, because the climate and the culture was ripe for change in that country at that time. It was in severe economic problems that it had been led into by the Mossedagh government. And therefore it took only a small nudge to make the change.

The reverse side, the loss of the Shah's position in Iran late last year, early this year, was quite a different situation. There was an economic turbulence, but it was overprosperity, overheating of the economy. And it was a combination of dissidents, of people who didn't get their share of the economic boom, people who were unhappy because they weren't part of the political process, people who were unhappy because of the conflict between Moslem religion and the modernization and Westernization of the society; people who didn't like the Shah and his manner of governing the country, and so on.

And what really happened was there was a true revo-

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lution in this country, not a foisted, fomented one from the outside. But all this discontent came together. It didn't occur to many of us that a 78 year old cleric who'd been in exile for fourteen years would be the catalyst that would bring it together.

And interestingly, I say it's a true revolution of discontent with the government, because it wasn't what the Ayatollah had to offer that made it come together, because now that they are in power, the Islamic glue is not holding. But what it was was an intense dislike of the government that existed at that time, a truly revolutionary fervor. And what happened to me, to others analyzing the scene was we assumed that while we clearly were reporting lots of discontent, lots of problems for the Shah, that we didn't see them coalescing into such a force that the Shah would not be able to exercise his strong military and police powers to keep it down. Clearly he was there, and he misjudged it. So did a lot of other people.

So I don't want to exonerate ourselves. We'd liked to have done better. I don't think "We lost Iran."

Way in the back.

Q: [Inaudible. Repeated below.]

MAN: The question is, the data that's taken in in any complicated organization: is the interpretation of it is colored as it runs through the hierarchy, from bottom to top? Does the present CIA have any methods or any ideas which will circumvent this in the future?

DIRECTOR TURNER: You're absolutely right. It's a continuing problem in many, many organizations. It's not one you can legislate any rule against. We are trying some new things.

One is to stress that explicating a problem -- and by that, I mean illustrating the factors pushing the issue in one direction, and the factors pushing it in the other direction, is much more important than coming out with a prediction that it's going to go in this direction, because then the policy-maker can add his own intelligence, his own ideas to what you've told him and say, "Sure, Turner says it's going more in this direction for these four reasons, but he also says there are three reasons it might go in this direction, and I happen to know something that makes me agree with this. And I'll disagree with him." That really helps the decision-maker. Giving him a flat prediction doesn't.

And if you do that, you help to see to it that both

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sides of the story are brought out rather than one being cut off by the supervisors because he believes in this.

I have, for instance, in our national intelligence estimates, our biggest sort of analytic product, a series of these that we do on different topics every year, and insisted that the dissenting views when people don't agree with the majority opinion be presented in the text of the document. And I said "views," not comments, because we used to take dissenting comments and stick them down at the bottom in a footnote. Most people skipped those or thought it was some quack here who was putting up a parochial idea. My view is no. If there's a reasonable dissenting opinion to what we express as the view of the community, we put it right in the text and say the majority believes so and so; there is a differing view that says so and so.

We are trying to create a journal of dissent in the Central Intelligence Agency, a journal where people can write their views which is different than anybody is expressing around the institution, and where they don't have to be subjected to all the review of their supervisors; a journal that will just let people blow off steam and get their ideas out to an audience of some sort.

Beyond that, I can only say it's a matter of creating a climate of encouraging the differing and the dissenting views to come forward and at least have an opportunity to be weighed with the other views.

Down here.

Q: What is your assessment of our future ability to meet our energy needs as compared to the other members of the international community?

MAN: What is our ability to meet our present national energy needs as compared to other members of the international community?

DIRECTOR TURNER: Well, we are probably in the best situation of any major industrial nation perhaps, except Great Britain in the period that her North Sea oil will survive. I hope I haven't omitted some other major country with a lot of oil. But what has happened, in my opinion, in recent months, is that we have lost a cushion of comfortability that we had. The Central Intelligence Agency two years ago this month produced a study which said that the world, as a whole, by the early 1980s would not be able physically to get out of the ground as much oil as it would want to consume on the top. We didn't know if it was going to be 1982 or 1983, maybe 1981. But we said there was going to be a period when we could pre-

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dict that would happen. Not that there wasn't enough oil in the world, but you couldn't get it out in that period of time. If you talk about 1990, you can do all kinds of things. But in the near term.

What's happened since that prediction two years ago is that we now are closer to that critical period, in my opinion, because Iranian production has gone from 5 1/2 or 6 million barrels a day to 3 1/2. Maybe it will go up some more; maybe it will go down some more. Saudi Arabian production, for a number of reasons, while temporarily up now to help us with the shortage from Iran, is predicted to stay at a lower level than we had thought a couple of years. There're other problems that have developed into smaller production capacities around the world. And today we're just more finely balanced. I liken it to the day that the nuclear weapon was first detonated by the Soviet Union. It did not make nuclear war inevitable. It made life more risky from then on.

The Iranian crisis has not made an energy crisis imminently inevitable. It has made the life we lead in the energy world much more risky today. And that, I think, is where we stand. It could go for several years without being a crisis. It could tip over tomorrow and become a real problem. We're just in a very delicately balanced situation.

Q: [Inaudible; repeated below.]

MAN: What should be -- what kind of cooperation should exist between an institution like CalTech and the CIA, be that directed at research or government funded research?

DIRECTOR TURNER: Well, I'll have to apologize to your president. I haven't inquired as to what his policies here are. But I'll give you my view as to what that relationship should be.

We have a firm rule that there will be no undercover relationship with an American university. I.e., we won't use what we call a "cut-out." We won't have a firm that is apparently dealing with you, when really it's the CIA, if you see what I mean. If we're going to have a relationship, a contractual, paid relationship for research on your campus. It will be above board and known by the administration. And that's very important to us. It's particularly important to be able to call upon members of the faculty of our American universities to consult with us, to second-guess us, to check on us, to give up stimulus from the outside. A research organization needs that kind of stimulus. We have a certain amount of it by turnover, but we need it in other areas where we don't have that turnover.

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I see no problem myself in classified research being done on university campuses. That's a matter that some campuses feel is not proper. But universities are part of America. And supporting legitimate, open research, open in the sense of being acknowledged as being done, but that must be kept classified, to me is a very important contribution that American universities can make to our military establishment and to our intelligence establishment.

Q: I heard Edward Teller give a speech a few years ago, and he suggested that any secret which is classified should be declassified after three years.

Do you agree with a suggestion like that?

DIRECTOR TURNER: No. But we do have, and have recently issued under President Carter's direction, an order that is much more stringent in insisting that classified information be declassified as rapidly as possible. But I think it's like any arbitrary rule on something as broad as that: it just doesn't fit all circumstances. I mean there is just some information that you have today that, three years from now, will still be very precious.

If you go back to my original conversation, if you have a spy in the midsts of the Soviet Union, do you think that I'm going to agree that three years from now I'll put his name in the newspapers? He wants to live for more than three years.

[Laughter and applause.]

Q: [Inaudible; repeated below.]

MAN: ...can be done for those researchers in foreign nations who are in contact with foreign nationals, who believe that the American researcher is part of an American agency. How can we protect his interests?

DIRECTOR TURNER: I've issued a policy that we will not utilize American academics to spy for us overseas in ways that would taint their academic connections. If you were going overseas on a university sponsored activity or something like, as opposed to going over as an individual, we don't think we ought to have any kind of association with you. Beyond that, if you're really talking about Iron Curtain countries, they're going to be infinitely suspicious any way.

But we've....

Q: I'm talking about France.

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DIRECTOR TURNER: Well, we have such a good intelligence exchange with France, I'm not sure why they should be all that up-tight if they thought you were working for the CIA, as we're very close allies.

But seriously, we are very interested in protecting the integrity, the reputation of the American academic community, which is a very important of our country. And you know, if we somebody to go overseas and spy, we want a spy, not an academic.

[Laughter and applause.]

We are very interested in asking you to share with us observations that you make when you're overseas when you come back. We think that's a perfectly proper thing, and we don't want to do it in a blantant way if it's going to cause you any problems. But we're really only going to find a most exceptional circumstance where we feel it's quite important to the national interest to ask an academic specifically to go over and look for some particular information.

Q: [Inaudible; repeated below.]

MAN: Can we trust Russia in a SALT treaty? And can we figure out whether they are complying?

DIRECTOR TURNER: I think there're many reasons why you can trust Russia on a SALT agreement, but I wouldn't do it.

[Applause.]

I wouldn't put the national security of this country at the risk of any other nation. But I don't think there exist many incentives for them to wildly cheat on a SALT agreement. You've got to have some real benefits for doing it, and I've tried to analyze what that benefit would be. And the chances of their getting a substantial benefit without our detecting it and breaking the treaty are very small, in my opinion.

Now, can they cheat? And can we check on, you know, every last detail? What I said to you is they can't cheat in a big way without, for sure, getting caught. But each of the sixty some provisions of the treaty has a different difficulty of checking. My job is not to tell whether it's a suitable treaty in the best interests of our country, because all I'm supposed to do is tell you or the Congress, the Senate, how well we can check on each of those sixty-some provisions. Then you would mix that with what's the danger to the country if they get away with cheating, how important is it to our national interest to have come control over the arms race, and so on, when you come up with "Is it a verifiable treaty, adequately verifi-

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ble for our national interests?" And I can only assure you that I've been consulted in the formulation of the treaty, and I've been able to advise our policy-makers on how well I anticipated, if it were written this way, we could do it, or if it were written that way. And once the treaty is signed, I'll be forthright with the Congress in giving them very expressive -- explicit -- whatever the word is -- details on just how well we can check on each provision of the treaty.

It's very unfortunate that the means of checking are so highly classified that we have not been able to share all of that detail with the American public. But your representatives in the Senate will have to be the ones who really do dig into all of the details, and they certainly will.

Q: [Inaudible; repeated below.]

MAN: I believe you all heard the question.

AUDIENCE: No.

MAN: Oh. If the fledgling CIA spy beginning -- that is, if she's a female -- does she begin at \$15,000?

[Laughter.]

DIRECTOR TURNER: If you're a female and interested -- I was trying to get the telephone number here. We're really looking for lady spies. Seriously, we are an equal opportunity employer.

[Laughter and applause.]

And I happen to think, over and above wanting to be an equal opportunity employer, that there is a great opportunity for ladies in our clandestine service today. We have as a tradition felt this was a masculine activity. And we've over-felt that, and we've overlooked the fact that while there are some countries -- Saudi Arabia -- where a woman just can't walk down the street at night without being very obvious, because the Saudi Arabians don't permit that. But there're other places where a lady will have great advantages.

[Laughter.]

It all started with Mata Hari any way.

Q: [Inaudible; repeated below.]

MAN: Is there any justification for the CIA to go into a foreign country and create circumstances to allow a particular political action or a military action to take

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place?

DIRECTOR TURNER: There certainly is not, if the CIA attempts to do that on its own. And in fact, it's against the law. And I am one of those people who doesn't have any plans to go to jail.

You're talking about what we call covert action, which is not collecting intelligence: it's influencing events in foreign countries. It has always been assigned, when authorized, to the Central Intelligence Agency. But there are very strict rules over it, and a law. The rules require that the President personally approve any such covert activity. And the law requires that I then notify seven committees of the Congress that we're going to do this.

So I think there could be some circumstances where the country would want to undertake that kind of activity. I think it's a rare case. But I don't think that we should eschew it. But it is under these very careful controls, so that it is not done by us in the CIA; it's done as a matter of national policy.

MAN: Do we have time for one more question?

Q: [Portion inaudible.] I wonder from your point of view what differences there are between the American CIA and the Russian KGB. What are the things that they do and we don't?

[Laughter.]

MAN: What are the major differences between the American CIA and Soviet KGB? And what do we do that they don't, and vice-versa?

DIRECTOR TURNER: They don't report to seven committees of Congress.

[Laughter and applause.]

I genuinely believe they have far fewer scruples than we do in the way they go about their business. I find the difficult, but important part of my task is to try to make those judgments as to what risks we should go to in order to obtain information which appears important for our policy-makers to have in order to make sound decisions on behalf of you and me and the entire Free World. Those aren't easy choices. But I'll bet you that I agonize over them more than my counterpart, Mr. Antropov does.

Q: [Inaudible; repeated, in part, below.]

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MAN: Admiral Turner, the estimation of the quality and magnitude of Soviet intelligence in our country.

DIRECTOR TURNER: Soviet intelligence is very active in our country. They do try to intercept communications. I wouldn't be personally concerned, if I were you. They're concentrating on government or commercial communications, not personal, private communications. They have a great advantage on us in that they're allowed a mission in the United Nations, which has free access over our entire country, whereas we aren't, for instance, allowed to go certain places in the Soviet Union. And therefore we correspondingly restrict their diplomats in Washington, but we can't restrict their United Nations diplomats.

They, of course, have the tremendous advantage that they can gain so much information by watching our television, reading our newspapers and subscribing to "Aviation Week" and the "Congressional Record."

But let me end on a more positive note, because while they are very pervasive and they do a lot more in the human intelligence activity than we do, and they are much less scrupulous than we, and they are not hampered, as we are to some extent, by controls which properly protect the privacy and the constitutional rights of the American citizen, we are, I think, equally capable even in the human intelligence area where they have specialized for all these years. It takes a great deal of skill; it takes a great deal of dedication. And I think we have that.

We are well ahead of them in the technical intelligence area, because our country has that sophistication and that capability.

And finally, the last part of intelligence that we have discussed some tonight is taking all that information you collect and doing something with it, analyzing it, coming up with dissenting and minority and majority opinions. And I just have an abiding confidence that in a free society like ours, where we encourage debate and dissent and freedom of expression, that that analysis can be done, and is done, far better in the research department of the CIA than in the research department of the KGB, or the dissenting analyst may not have a job or a head, or something, tomorrow.

And that's what we're here to protect, that right to have those dissenting views, to have that freedom of expression. And there is a conflict between the openness in our society and a level of secrecy necessary to conduct these activities in defense of our freedoms, I can only assure you we are trying to find that right balance so we do, indeed,

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protect and defend and not lose what we're trying to defend
in that process.

It's been fun to be with you. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]